The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

EDITORS: L. P. JACKS, M.A., AND JOSEPH WOOD.

VOL. III. NO. 11. JANUARY, 1896. ONE PENNY.

The Message of the New Year.

I asked the New Year for some motto sweet,
Some rule of life with which to guide my feet.
I asked, and paused: he answered soft and low,
"God's will to do."

"Will knowledge then suffice, New Year?" I cried;
And, ere the question into silence died,
The answer came, "Nay: remember, too,
God's will to do."

Once more I asked, "Is there no word to tell?"
And once again the answer sweetly fell,
"Yes: this one thing, all other things above,
God's will to love."

Another Year.

Another year of happy work
That better is than play,
Of simple cares, and love that grows
More sweet from day to day.

Another year of Beauty's feast,
At every moment spread,
Of silent hours when grow distinct
The voices of the dead.

Another year to follow hard
Where better souls have trod;
Another year of life's delight,
Another year of God.

The Unknown Year.

I know not what the year may bring,
Nor know I what the year may take,
But, take or bring whate'er it may,
I know that there can come no day
In which I may not trust and sing
"The Lord my soul will not forsake."

The New Year.

A SERMON BY REV. S. WENTWORTH BROOKE, OF THE FIRST CHURCH, BOSTON.

We are leaving behind us now the old year, And it is only natural, therefore, that my text should be "The New Year." I think it is a mistake to let these anniversaries go by us as if they meant little or nothing. There are some, indeed, who tell us soberly and solemnly, that the new year is of no more service to us than is a milestone along a road. As that marks off the distance we have travelled, so does the new date describe the completion of a period of time. Yet milestones are but seldom only marks of distance. The advertiser fixes his bills on them, for he remembers that our eyes dwell longer on them than on many other things along the road; the traveller pauses by them, to look backward and forward; the sick woman, dragging herself painfully along to the distant town, sees encouragement in their homely granite faces. Our hopes and fears, our longings, our desires, gather, indeed, unconsciously about and personify the common things of daily life. And the common year-stone, therefore, by which we are so soon to pass, can never be only a mark to us. We reach it, and think of the many things that have happened since the last December; we pause, and look back with conflicting thoughts on the fading landscape of the past; we turn with anxiety, eager hope, many emotions, to look up the ascent toward the heavens we have yet to climb.

I want to speak of the regrets, the doubts, the passions, the joys, we feel on this last day of the old year! What should be our attitude toward

the past? How should we face the strange, mysterious future?

I suppose there is not one of us here who does not look back with regret—a regret that is sometimes the deepest thing in his life—into the days that are past and gone. The young man, struggling, baffled, defeated, casts passionate glances back into earlier hours, when hope was boundless and achievement seemed so easy; the grown-up man finds a strange force tugging at his heart-strings as he walks under the trees of the old homestead; the failure wakes with tears in his eyes from his dreams of better and happier times; and friendship knows there are no friends so trusted and so dear as the friends of childhood and youth; and love must stand once more, and still once more, by the grave of love. Very dear, indeed, to all of us is the past. Old things are at least safe and sure as new things are not: old things contain a goodness, a truth, a beauty, that has been tried and tested and found to work well; and the memory of what we have conquered and loved in the past is a better augury for the future than all the hopes and all the dreams of the imagination. I am sure that a man is worth very little as a human heart and soul who does not cherish warmly his past. They are restless, changeable, fickle, untamable,—clothed, indeed, sometimes, in charm and brilliancy, but wanting strength and love,—the men and women without a past where their thoughts linger often and tenderly. What is the patriotism worth that admires all countries equally? What a hypocrite is the man who has no dislikes, no prejudices, no boredoms! How false is the toleration that cares as warmly for one church as for another! How tiresome is the man whose convictions, right or wrong, do not pulse through his being as the life-blood through his body! They are not to be trusted,—the men and women who do not look back into a past that has in it much that is good and true, beautiful and dear. They are unfit for steadfast work at the common duties of daily life; they are incapable of steady friendships; they have brought with them out of the years that are gone no heart, no soul, and are ruthless in their ardent, unconscious selfishness. Let us look back, indeed, with many longing regrets, from the year-stone of 1895, upon the fading landscape of the past. God has been there; and there his sunshine rests now.

But yet the past is not—can never be—our home. However passionately we may gaze into its features, we have yet to recognise that the "auld lang syne" can never come back. Some here must remember, for instance, the expectation and the joy with which they revisited some old town, full once for them of the very soul of happiness. You anticipated a renewal there of the delightful past; you stepped out of the station with a yearning desire to revive and re-create the old joy. But how vain and how useless were all your efforts! The streets scarcely looked the same, the building were spiritless, the people comparatively uninteresting,—the whole air of the place strangely inhospitable. Something had indeed gone from the spot never to return. It was the warmth and the glow you had once felt there, and hoped to find again.

So is it with all our human pasts. The hand of the present joy is ever on its lips, bidding adieu. The first rapture of love fades and changes into a love that is worse or better; the forms of those we have loved and lost grow more and more dim; letters seem but cold shadows of the living heart out of which they came; and photographs can never bring back for us the changing, delightful play of life on the features or the glory of the landscape. The past will go: the past must go. Even as I speak, the slow, sure waves of Time are casting a deeper blur on the happiest and fairest moments. The whole world changes second after second; and we, who are part and parcel of its changes, must change, too, with them. Silently, invisibly, a mysterious power pushes us, —against, often, our hearts' own wishes,—pushes us out into a future all our knowledge of which is a guess, a hope and a beckoning ideal.

I cannot know whether there are any here this morning who seek to resist this great kind thrust, —who would linger on in their past; but I know my own nature and the nature of a few others, and I dare therefore say to them what I often need to have said to myself. I dare to say that we remain in our past only at our peril. We must turn round from gazing there, cherish the past as a memory, but never as a hope, if we would be alive in the future. Before us, not behind us; above us, not below us,—there runs the road we have all to travel. God is a God not of the dead, but of the living. Let us take those old words of Christ home to our hearts through the coming year.

I think of the many who are looking back remorsefully into their past mistakes and faults. They are in prisons; they are wanderers and outcasts; they sit before me this morning,—those who let remorse sap their strength for the future. Why are we men and women so anxious about the wrongs we have done? Some answer, It is because their friends and ministers assure them that only thus can they correct the present. Well, I never yet heard of an architect who invented a new style by gazing at the architectural aberrations of the past. It was, on the contrary, the successes of the past, the glories of the past, which, working in his brain, rounded the dome of St. Paul's or that reared here the tower of Trinity. We may leave, indeed, the failures of the past to God. He does not forget what we have done. We need not, our friends need not, trouble themselves lest we should not suffer for what we have done. God takes care that the past does not forget us. He writes sins down into the living tablets of our flesh and inner life. He will take care that neither we nor our posterity forget the past till all its wrongs are expiated. What is the use, then, of reminding ourselves so urgently of what another reminds us? Let us look up rather to the ascent. On the path above us, the sunlight lies; the birds wheel over it like a living joy; the brook runs tinkling by; the heavens bend over us all, and invite us forward. Child of God! what have you to do with the mistakes and faults of your past? Remorse is for the dead beats on life's great journey, but not for you who have reached, with some manhood in you, another year-stone, and who can still step forward into the new future.

I think once more of those upon whom exceptional suffering or loss has come during the past months. It would be strange if they did not gaze passionately from the year-stone of 1896 into the happiness that is gone. Never does his country seem so fair to a man as when he is leaving it for ever. His whole heart, as he stands on the moving ship, is in his eyes; and they are gathering rock and tree, the fading port, the one farewell for which he looks, into his being. We do not interfere with the solitude of a man at such a moment. What eyes can he possibly have then for the future? So is it with all human losses. Love must clasp the past close and fast, lest love itself be lost.

And yet loss and suffering bring their own wonderful gifts with them. It is out of the darkness of pain that some of the greatest things of the world have come to us. You will remember that some of the few spontaneous lyrics of our time were written by one who said of himself that he learnt in suffering what he taught in song. The great cathedrals once more—those vaults and arches that soar and yet fall as they soar—were fashioned out of the sad sincerity of hearts that knew a deeper pain of want, and sprang out of pain into a higher aspiration, than the architect of the Parthenon ever felt. "The Crucifixion," again, of Tintoret, "Hamlet" and "Lear," "In Memoriam," were not born out of experiences of prosperity, happiness and joy. Those who conceived them were sent first, against their will, to travel through the country of pain; and it was only after they had emerged from out that country that they built up the immortal things which have calmed and purified so many human hearts. And you and I have once more friends to whom we, each of us, go in trouble. They do not say much to us. We do not indeed want much more from them but their presence, a touch on the arm, a word, to bring us endurance, strength, and peace. Where did they learn this secret of healing? In their hours of pain, in their months of obscure struggle against haunting memories of loss and grief, in wishes breathed to God that God did not seem to hear.

I am bold enough to ask those who stand this morning by the stone of the new year, with suffering about them, to consider these things. Many of the best, the highest, the most hopeful lives have become what they are by travelling through pain, anxiety, hopelessness and grief. Like little children who do not learn the depths of their mother's love till they have to lay their heads in tears on her lap, so has it to be with all of us.

Let us carry these thoughts with us into the year that is coming. The old year is dying: the past is vanishing behind us, and the invisible hand is thrusting us gently out into the future beyond us. Their rises the ascent, murmuring like a mountain in spring with many voices,—voices of fear, voices of hope and faith. Shall not the weakness in our past fade with the

fading, past? Shall not the memories of all that was good and true, loving and fair there, walk with us as living allies, and help us step by step into the eternal life of God?

> "Ring out the old, ring in the new
> The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
> Ring out the darkness of the land,
> Ring in the Christ that is to be."

The Next Forward Movement.

If I understand the London Forward Movement correctly, its aim is twofold. It is, in the first place, to take advantage of the agitation in the public mind over the education controversy, to put forward the Unitarian interpretation of the Christian religion; in the second place, it is directed towards strengthening our churches. And it proposes to do this by the delivery of expository lectures and the distribution of tracts.

I may introduce the main theme of this paper with a word or two of humble criticism. I have nothing to say against the fitness of these methods to the first of the objects mentioned. If it is well that theology as understood by Unitarians should be expounded to the general public at the present time, no better means can be employed than the delivery of lectures and the distribution of pamphlets.

But the Forward Movement is recommended as a means for strengthening our churches. I wish to give some reasons why I think that it cannot be successful.

It is frequently alleged that there is a large number of persons who are Unitarians but have no connection with Unitarian churches. A large proportion of them continue to attend more or less orthodox places of worship, especially Anglican churches, though they are out of sympathy with the doctrines preached there. The uncharitable charge them with hypocrisy, superior persons convict them of a single interest in the music and the millinery, the more indulgent regard ignorance of organized Unitarianism as their excuse. They agree, however, that it is our duty by means of an active propaganda to persuade them of the error of their ways and induce them to join our congregations.

There is another large body of persons who are strongly prejudiced against Unitarianism because they misconceive what it is. They count it an accursed thing though they are without an elementary acquaintance with its principles. A great effort, it is urged, should be made to remove this ignorance and overcome the consequent antipathy.

Now, no doubt it would be well if both of these bodies of persons could be enlightened as to their respective errors. But are lectures and tracts likely to effect this?

Take the first class of people. If they are really Unitarians but persist in attending non-Unitarian places of worship, how will expository lectures and tracts induce them to desist? They will but hear or read that of which they are already persuaded; it will be another case of preaching to the converted. All that they will gain is the somewhat academic information that the views they hold are properly described in the dictionary as Unitarian. Exposition hardly seems to be the prescription for their case.

And with reference to the second class, it would seem that they are still less likely to respond to this treatment. Persons who have been ready to make up their minds concerning a religion they do not understand and to condemn it unheard will be impervious even to the sweet reasonableness of our expository literature. Therefore, I think, in such cases forward methods cannot meet with much success.

But, whether they succeed or not, I should like to point out what seems to me a danger in their use. It seems to me to emphasise altogether unduly what I may call the platform side of church work. The heathen to whom such a mission is addressed are not the evilly-disposed but the ill-informed; its converts are those who have accepted new opinions. The appeal which seems to be made is something like this: Here are the old and the new faith: you must see how much higher, how much more rational is the new than the old. And if you do see it, then it is your duty to identify yourself with any church that professes the new faith. That is to say, if you can accept the platform of that church, it should be a sufficient reason for your joining it.

Now this looks too much as if the principal means of expounding a religion were the use of the spoken or written word, as if the chief method were the direct method. I cannot help thinking that the very limited success of such

efforts is due to a disregard of the fact that the most powerful and most permanent influences which govern men in their choice of religious associations are indirect. They are not directly argued into churches, they are drawn into them and maintained in them by influences of whose action upon themselves they are often unaware. I might mention many of those indirect influences, but for my present purpose I shall consider one only. I mean the influence exercised by the service apart from the sermon. 'Every life,' it has been said, 'is a profession of 'faith, and exercises an inevitable and silent 'propaganda.' We may use the same language of every act of public worship. Every service, every building in which that service is held is a profession of the faith of its congregation, and exercises an inevitable and silent propaganda. Such a propaganda is bound to be more fruitful in permanent results than any other. At any rate it is my belief that it is more calculated to strengthen a church than the more direct propaganda of the lecture and the leaflet. And it is to the work of such a propaganda that I should like to see the next Forward Movement address itself.

It is the first necessity of such a movement that this fact should be recognised, viz.: that a 'church is chiefly and primarily a temple and 'altar, not a school and platform.' It is not its first object to cultivate the character of its members or to teach anything to anybody. These, no doubt, are universal accompaniments of its activity, of profound importance, but they are not its rationale. It exists by reason of a common spontaneous desire to express the outpouring of the soul of man towards the Power that made him. Hymn and anthem and prayer and all the details, be they few or many, that make up the act of public worship, flow *out* of us, exacted by the necessity of the soul for expression. Therefore it is of the first importance that public worship should be so ordered as to help and not to hinder this craving for adequate expression.

Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the functions of the pulpit and of the service are diverse, and that the pulpit is the last, not the first creation of the church. It may be necessary, of course it is necessary, that the pulpit should give prominence to doctrine, and busy itself with endeavours to inculcate clearness of thinking and intellectual honesty. But the function of the service, *i.e.*, prayer and praise, is a higher function, to give utterance to those inner abiding universal emotions of which the various doctrines are the passing expressions.

So much for the theory of the matter. I must crave your forgiveness for having delayed to give utterance to such truisms.

They are truisms, but it is my belief that it would be well for us to consider whether we do not, in our practice, too frequently neglect them. We might seriously ask whether we are, as a rule, doing all that is possible to make our expressions of worship adequate and effective. The feeling, the emotion, the impulse are there: but are we not in danger of injuring them by stinting the forms in which they find utterance, by the nervous fear of letting ourselves go?

Our leaflets speak of our bright and cheerful faith, of the grandeur and beauty of its truths. Are we doing all that is possible to make the forms and expressions of worship reflect, and, so to speak, incarnate that brightness and cheerfulness, and grandeur and beauty? One service bearing in what it contains, and in the manner of its performance, the mark of these qualities will do more to convince the incredulous of the truth of these statements in the leaflet than a 1,000 tracts.

I am persuaded that, speaking generally, we ought to pay much more attention to this matter, and that it would be calculated to somewhat strengthen our churches. Take the question of the young people who have lately been perplexing some of those good folk who contribute to the gaiety of the nation by writing letters to "The Inquirer." No complaint is more frequent among us than that of inability to keep our young people; the old families, the pillars of the church in an earlier generation, leave no successors. Numbers of the young people drift away, some into an indifference to all religious observances, others, a majority I think, into the arms of the Church of England. It is affirmed by some that this is due either to the perversity of the younger generation or to Anglican insidiousness, explanations which are more petulant than helpful.

There is, I fancy, a more likely explanation. One of the legacies of Puritanism has been the exceeding prominence given in the act of worship to the Sermon. It has been regarded, it is, very

largely, regarded still as the centre of the service, around which all the other parts are grouped and up to which they are supposed to lead. The result has been the excessive elaboration that the sermon has received, some of the best examples of which may be found in those fearsome volumes of elephantine discourses that repose in unbroken peace on the shelves of many of our old chapel libraries. Far be it from me to suggest that there is anything like them in the present day. But, though the sermon may have altered its nature, the position it occupies, as almost the principal reason why there should be a service at all, is as strong as it was of old; and one evidence of this is seen in the confidence which the promoters of Forward Movements appear to preserve in the power of the lecture.

Now, owing to this long pre-occupation with the sermon and its office, some elementary facts of human nature have been forgotten. For one thing, youth and its limitations have been forgotten. Of all people, the young people—(I don't mean children merely)—are least affected by preaching. Of course, I do not say that they are not affected at all, but they are less affected than their elders, and in so far as they are affected, it will be in proportion as the preaching relies upon figure and parable, the very method of the Master. They are far more open to indirect influences, to music and ritual, which are only figure and parable in another form, and very naturally, therefore, they will be least attracted to forms of service where the aid of these things is little sought, and an almost exclusive reliance is placed upon the direct appeal of the pulpit. This is the reason, I believe, why very many of them, in fact increasing numbers, especially among the better educated, prefer to attend the services of the Church of England. And if a Church employs these things to a high end, uses them legitimately, by means of the beautiful in what is visible and sensuous to draw the minds of the young into a reverence and love of what is unseen and supersensible, then, I do not think, it lies with us to cavil or complain.

There are others besides the young people who would be assisted by a little more attention to this matter. But I must deal with them very shortly. It is sometimes said that as other sections of Nonconformists get on very well in spite of indifference to forms and ceremonies this feature cannot be any hindrance to us. I think it is forgotten that we differ from the rest of Nonconformists in one important particular. We have among us far greater variety in the personal religious history of members than is possible with any other section. And not a few of those who come to us have been brought up in communions, where great attention has been given to forms and rites. A very small proportion of such ever find their way into other Nonconformist bodies. Certainly, the fact that they have come to us shows that they counted intellectual honesty as of more importance than any externals. But, nevertheless, a good many of them preserve their early prepossessions in favour of beautiful and fitting forms. And it would help them more than a good many suspect, it would sometimes serve to fan into a real enthusiasm what is often little more than a torpid consent, if we could put off a little of the rigidity that traditions impose and adapt ourselves to the wants of a new time

But you will probably think that it is not enough to say broadly that more attention should be given to this matter, and that something a little more detailed is wanted. I quite agree, though in such a case the important matter is that the desire should be aroused; it will then create the details of itself. Nevertheless, at the risk of being carved iuto little pieces when I sit down by devotees of the Puritan tradition, I will venture upon something of the sort.

In the first place, do not hesitate to adopt the habits and forms of other churches, when you secretly admire them, but are fearful of giving countenance to doctrines and practices which are associated with them. Borrow them freely because they are beautiful, and fitting, and helpful, and let that reason be sufficient. If they have been too long allied with what is hurtful and wrong, show the world that they can be allied with what is high and pure. Show that there is no reason in the nature of things why Unitarians should be content with a minimum of what is gracious and attractive to the ear and to the eye in public worship.

Cease to rely, as a general rule, upon what is called the free order of worship, but signalise the Catholicity of our faith and emphasise the fact that we meet for purposes of *common* prayer by combining fixed forms with free. And make some use,

if you can, without conscientious objections, of what is a national inheritance, the incomparable liturgy of the Church. Show that the new faith is after all bound up with the old, by pressing into your service words of prayer and praise that have come down through the centuries, are charged with the religious emotions of successive generations and consecrated by the satisfaction and the joy multitudes have found and still find in them.

Where there are beautiful churches, let the best use be made of them. Do not spoil the effect of a handsome Gothic building by too bare and dull a form of service, with which the genius of the structure is wholly out of accord. There is no reason why, because it is "radiant and adorned outside" with spire and stained glass windows the service within should be marked by a counter-balancing austerity. It is a great thing, no doubt, to have travelled so far from Puritan ideas that we have a few of such buildings; and yet it is a strange thing that the congregations who are very proud of such churches often retain the old historic objection, as they phrased it three centuries ago, to "squeaking choristers disguised in white surplices, imitating the manner and fashion of Antichrist."

Spend less money on propagandist publications, and more upon architecture with its silent and inevitable propaganda; Let the richer churches assist the poorer to improve their buildings and enrich their services. Never let us permit the thought that "the House of God" should be "meaner than our own."

Moreover, enlist, by every possible device, the interest of the children and young people of the congregation in all that belongs to the building and its services. Do not allow them to suppose that it belongs to their elders, by whose gracious permission they are suffered to appear within it from time to time. But let them feel that it is theirs and that their hands may do something to add to its beauty and heighten its impressiveness, and encourage them to spend time and thought upon the effort.

I am well aware that I have said things which will appear dangerous doctrine to many. I have spoken of matters which are not vital, but trivial, some will think. I may be told—to use Martineau's phrase—that "neglected duties are not enforced by architecture, or victories over temptation achieved by music." That is quite true: only it must not be thought to involve, what some imagine is the converse proposition, that a disregard of æsthetics is the first condition of moral progress.

I know, too, that many are of opinion that the protest against priestcraft is so necessary that not only should it find utterance from the pulpit but in every part and phase of worship. The old Presbyterian meeting houses, says Mr. Page Hopps, 'are a fine protest against mere externalism.' Perhaps they are: but I demur altogether to the idea that protest against error forms any essential part of the act of worship. It is right, it is fitting, it is necessary, in the pulpit. But as an element in devotion I cannot recognise it. I do not understand that attitude of devotion, in which, while one eye is fixed upon the heaven of heavens, the other is directed in solemn menace at those grievous sacerdotalists in the next street.

But even granting the fitness of the protest, is it not strangely ineffective? Sacerdotalism owes no small portion of its strength to its alliance with beautiful forms; and I am strongly persuaded that the present sacerdotal revival has only been rendered possible because the churches in which it is proceeding have been foolishly allowed a virtual monopoly of these things. Mrs. Ward pointed out in her Essex Hall lecture that the educated class is also the critical and sensitive class, and this class troubles itself to-day, over a much wider field than it used to do, with the matters of artistic expression. I believe that to be true—not of the educated class alone, but that there is a tendency generally among us to greater sensitiveness in this region. Many are ready to suffer the pretensions of priests if they think that an active resistance to them must involve a surrender of so much that ministers to their sympathies.

I have as great a horror as anybody, I hope, of mere externalism, and I know that there have been times when it was necessary to concentrate attention upon its evils. But I do not think that it is so necessary to day. At any rate, I am sure that Unitarians do not need to be convinced of them. It is the other side of the shield that requires to be shown. And that is why I have laid these considerations before you.

AMBROSE BENNETT.

Unity of Worship amid Diversities of Theology.

IV.

REV. P. WICKSTEED, M.A.

All the "Prolegomena," so to speak, that lead up to the proposal, strike me as admirable. Further, the idea that the unity sought should be primarily in the worship and only secondarily in the sermon wins my heartiest sympathy. The scheme itself challenges criticism on two points. The number of Sundays it is proposed to allocate strikes me as very much in excess of what is practicable. I should say that from six to twelve Sundays was quite the outside that could be contemplated with any hope of a wide response. Secondly, I am far from regarding the use of even one hymn and prayer by all the agreeing congregations in common as essential, or even desirable. No man or body of men could draw up a series of prayers which would be accepted as widely as the unity of feeling to be expressed extends. Moreover, one of the great advantages of the scheme, to my mind, would be its effect in emphasising the significance of the *service* as a vital and organic utterance of some aspect of religion. The disconnected scrappiness that often characterises the services in our chapels seems to me a grave evil, and in reading the proposals under consideration, almost my first feeling was the hope that the importance laid on the service, and the direct challenge to make it purposeful, might give many of us a needed stimulus and guidance in preparing our own devotional services. A series of special hymns and prayers, if offered to those who desired them, would be helpful; but if taken as the *sine qua non* of consent to the proposed form of expression of religious union it would, in my opinion, be positively pernicious.

It seems premature to discuss further detail, but I am glad to have been allowed the opportunity of expressing the deep impression the proposed scheme has made upon my mind and my sense of the fruitfulness of its main suggestion."

V.

REV. J. ESTLIN CARPENTER, M.A.

"The proposals made by Mr. Jacks in the November number on 'Unity of Worship amid Diversities of Theology' will be differently judged, according to the aim ascribed to them. Are they offered as a basis for the reunion of Christendom? Then it may be safely affirmed that they will not settle the question between the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury. But their author would seem to have modestly designed for them a narrower scope. He belongs to a group of Churches which are commonly described by the world outside them according to a doctrinal classification, with which alone the world is familiar, as Unitarian. Their particular theology, however, is not the essence of their being or the ground of their fellowship. Behind the beliefs which are more or less common to them all, lie certain principles concerning the bases of religious thought, the modes of apprehending religious truth, and the relation of particular views to universal worship. Among the Churches thus drawn together by common sympathies and aspirations Mr. Jacks finds the bond of union far less strong than he desires. And for the purpose of increasing its strength he suggests certain measures based on the ideas (1) that the Churches agree in desiring to give a religious interpretation to life, and (2) that that desire will find its most effective expression in a certain community of worship.

"Now it cannot be denied that the Churches exist, or that they are to a certain extent organised individually, both for their secular maintenance and for their spiritual functions. But the individualism of earlier generations is giving way before a new collectivism. The Churches that appear to thrive most internally and to develope fastest externally, are knit together by the firmest bonds of theological concord and ecclesiastical administration. These bonds we have again and again rejected. It does not appear likely that any attempt to create an orthodoxy of creed, or any form of hierarchical supervision, will ever be naturalised amongst us; nor do I take it that the proposals of Mr. Jacks are in the remotest degree designed to establish either the one or the other. But is it therefore impossible to conceive that a closer union should prevail amongst us? Mr. Jacks, at any rate, feels a want, and expresses it. Many of us have felt a similar desire, but have shrunk from expressing it so clearly, because, perhaps, we had no remedies to offer. We have fallen back on large but undefined ideas of communion with the

whole Christian Church in which, however, to some minds there was little satisfaction, because the fellowship was, so to speak, all on one side. Meantime the collectivist tendency has aroused new ideals in religion as in politics and sociology. We have asked ourselves how much, after all, of our moral and spiritual nature can be accounted for on the old lines; we have studied anew with fresh applications St. Paul's conception of the body and the members; and out of such thoughts have come vague hopes for realising a closer fellowship in our religious life. Those, therefore, who share more or less definitely the aspiration to which Mr. Jacks has given shape, will be grateful to him for his invitation to consider the causes and the possible remedies of their dissatisfaction. And even if the ultimate solution should be different from that which he propounds, or if, at the worst, it should be discovered that no solution is practicable at all, it will still be well that questions should have been asked, that we may learn clearly what can, and what can not, be answered.

"I understand Mr. Jacks to seek a common expression of certain ideas in worship. Some of his readers have apparently supposed that his purpose was to enforce a compulsory programme, not to say a strait-jacket, upon the preacher. But I see no menace in his plan to the independence of the sermon. The discourse may be dropped altogether, but the New Christian Year, which reposes on common prayer and hymn, would preserve its sequence unimpaired. Moreover, the method and the mind of the teacher are not identical from place to place. Some may be hampered under the limitations of a suggested order of thought. Others, less accustomed to the free movement of the spirit, find it not a constraint, but a stimulus: instead of being impeded, they are helped.

"Our greatest prophet, however, deprecates any attempt to organise the spiritual life. And such an objection, coming from such a source, might seem at first fatal to the scheme. But it might be urged in reply that *all public worship* involves such an attempt. If we are to come together at all, we must have a fixed hour and a common house of meeting. Every religious service at eleven o'clock on a Sunday morning offers itself as a means for the expression or organising of a joint devotion. To that extent even the Society of Friends organises the spiritual life of its members. As soon as a specific order is prescribed, and the congregational psalm of praise or the exhortation of the minister receives a particular place in a regulated series of acts of worship, the organisation becomes more explicit and tenacious. Like so many other questions, this, in its turn, becomes one of practical limits. How can we most effectively combine the fixed and the variable elements? How may we preserve the freedom of the spirit together with adequate security against its poverty or its aberration? At present our ecclesiastical individualism has landed us in the most astonishing variety of provision for congregational requirements; but, as I am myself guilty in this respect, it does not become me to complain. It may be true that congregations which use the same liturgical forms are not at present conscious of any special sympathy with each other. But that is largely due to the fact that such co-operation is accidental and without mutual knowledge. The voluntary participation in a common order would, on the other hand, continuously remind the worshipper of the fellowship into which he had thus entered. Who can say how much of the power of the 'Book of Common Prayer' is due to the fact that everyone who commits himself to its guidance knows that he is not coming to the throne of grace alone, but kneels in an invisible multitude which no man can number?

"My own belief has long been that that service is most helpful to congregations comprising old and young, the more and the less educated, which admits both elements of devotion, the determinate and the changing. At present we have but one common element, the Bible. Is it possible to adopt a common hymn book? There, in its pages, the communion of saints might be felt with quickening effect on our Church life. It would only be a step further in the same direction to allot special hymns to special occasions. The incidents of historic commemoration, the succession of the seasons, the growing practice of devoting particular days to concerns of local interest in religion or philanthropy, indicate an ample range of topics. The outline which Mr. Jacks has given us is obviously intended only as a sketch by one single mind. Personally, I find it too scanty rather than too

full. It leaves three months for vacation, like the Boston Churches; while the aim at which it aspires needs continuity above everything. It is observed that it lacks Christianity. But the Christianity is not in the scheme, or series of topics; that lies in its treatment, in the mode in which its various ideas are placed in relation to the conceptions and life of Jesus; it would be for those who might work out the plan to steep its execution in the Christian spirit. For this end, probably, much more concrete illustration would be required. To seize and quicken the imagination, thoughts must be presented in life. One of the immense advantages in a historic basis for religion such as that offered to us in the Bible, is the vast store of personal types, of familiar illustrations, which it provides. In endeavouring to give imaginative shape to the rational piety which we desire to foster, the gifts and graces and obligations, in the midst of which religion lives and moves and has its being, must be brought out of their dateless eternity, and displayed under the conditions of our humanity. Our first efforts may seem as artificial as the *annus sacer* of Positivism; but I, for my part, am prepared to welcome any serious attempt to draw our Churches closer together in a devotional order in which the unity of the Spirit shall not be hopelessly obscured by the diversity of the form."—J. ESTLIN CARPENTER.

VI.

"A MINISTER FROM THE NORTH" *writes*:—

For many years I have tried to secure for myself and my good folk, that comfortable feeling of being not alone in worship, by following the course of the ecclesiastical year, keeping, so far as preaching about them goes, many of the Saints' Days, always following the course of the Lectionary, and usually taking my subject, from one or other lessons of the day. There has been much comfort in this, and *some* difficulty, with an occasional necessity for antagonistic words which were better avoided. But, the sense of occasional divergence has been as nothing compared with the comfort and the support of the feeling; in all English Churches the words we are reading are being read. I think that my congregation, a little tried by this at first, now appreciate it.

"Your new Christian year would not make this use of the lessons and associations of the ecclesiastical year impossible. With a very little management it would work in with it very well: and it would have this inestimable advantage for ministers and their congregations, that the thoughts of both would be settled before the Sunday comes on the same subject. I have tried for three and twenty years to secure this by printing my subjects in a monthly calendar, and, on the whole, I have found that the plan was a good one for me and for my people. I need hardly say, I hope, that I have no sympathy with denominational controversy, which, always of doubtful advantage for outsiders, too often spoils the tempers and narrows the sympathies of those who are in our churches; but may it not be that, the best possible counter-action for that may be found in some such plan as this of yours, which may help to unite us round those common hopes and aims which are so often ignored in the easy endeavour to show other people—who are usually absent,—that *their* hopes and aims are wrong. I shall go heartily with you in your attempt.

VII.

REV. C. B. UPTON, B.A.

"Up to a comparatively recent date our individual congregations were linked together into a sort of loosely organized whole, by the all-pervading conviction that we were all partners in the important work of maintaining that the New Testament does not sanction some of the chief dogmas set forth in the orthodox creeds. At the present time, however, this biblical disputation has lost nearly all its interest, for, on the one hand, we have come to see that, though there is no full-blown Trinitarianism in the Gospels and Epistles, there are nevertheless expressions which form the germs of the objectionable doctrines which our reason and spiritual insight compel us to repudiate; and, on the other hand, some of the leading minds in the orthodox churches approach very near our position, and value the Bible not as an infallible oracle on matters theological, but rather as a most precious record of the profoundest spiritual experiences of our race. As, then, the days of textual controversy are practically near their end, it becomes the more imperative that, if we are to live and grow, we should seek some

fresh and more essential principle of unity, some unifying and inspiring consciousness of a great common spirit and function holding us all together in one living organism.

"For myself, I cannot see "that a common sentiment of worship" is a sufficiently distinctive principle to inspire and unite us, but I think I do see in the tone which has pervaded the Triennial Conferences clear indications that very many among us are becoming vividly conscious that our free churches have now more than ever a most grand and important *raison d'être*, and that our special mission in the present condition of Christendom is to cherish and accentuate the truth that all genuine religious faith finally rests, and must rest, on the consciousness of the immediate self-revelation of God in each religious mind and heart. There is, I believe, a rapidly growing consensus among us, that in the sublime utterance in the Sermon on the Mount, "the pure in heart shall see God," we have the real clue to all theological authority and theological truth. As I have said, many of the best minds among the orthodox have a more or less clear perception of this basal truth, but by reason of the fettering influence of their theological dogmas they mutilate and to a great extent render ineffective this glorious gospel, and mischievously limit and adulterate Jesus' supreme principal of spiritual discernment by making an unnatural and artificial distinction between the incarnation of the Eternal in the Son of Mary of Nazareth, and the incarnation of God in the rational, moral and spiritual nature of all men. The members of our congregations are becoming more and more actuated by the conviction that it is this revelation of the indwelling presence of the Father in the human minds and hearts which constitutes the very essence of the Gospel which Jesus lived and died to proclaim and illustrate, and that our high vocation is to manifest in our lives and in our preaching the purity and all-sufficiency of this supreme Evangel, which, however imperfectly discerned, has throughout the ages been the vivifying principle which has made Christianity so mighty a power for good. The consciousness that it is specially laid upon us in the present day to preach this grand doctrine of the Incarnation of God in all its simplicity and purity and thus to enter into the very heart and soul of the life and work of Jesus ought surely to kindle within us a divine enthusiasm, and an intense feeling of brotherhood as co-workers in so magnificent a cause.

"For my own part, I cherish the hope that the scheme of organization so ably and elaborately set forth in Leeds, is not dead, but only sleeping, and and I trust that a deepening sense of the profound faith which unites us, and the all-important mission which Providence has placed in our hands, will at no very distant day open our eyes and hearts to a perception of the vital claims of this practical realization of true brotherhood. At the same time I do not question that a real fostering of the feeling of organic spiritual unity may be gained by the adoption of some yearly order of subjects of sermons such as has been so well presented by Mr. Jacks in this magazine. The consciousness of God's actuating presence in the soul not only sheds a transfiguring light and glory over our personal duties and our personal hopes, but also over our historical relations with all the great spirits and great religions of the world, and converts social sympathy and mutual help into an essential element in our religious life. To feel, then, on certain Sundays in the year that we are all with one accord seeking to realize and emphasise one particular salient feature in the grand self-revelation of God in humanity, would do something, I believe, to make our devotions and our discourses more warm and living, and would also help to inspire us with the ennobling thought that we are all sharers in God's eternal life, and in a certain true sense, "severally members one of another."

"In respect to the detail of the scheme, I feel inclined to suggest that the personality and utterances of Jesus of Nazareth, to whose profound spiritual insight we mainly owe our clear perception of our intimate union and communion with God, and in whose life and character we possess such a precious realization of what is involved in the soul's self-surrender to the Eternal, appear to claim a more specific recognition than is presented on the surface of the programme before us.

In conclusion I would venture to suggest that as a needful complement to the "New Christian Year" we ministers of the free churches would do well to hold a Summer School of Theology. This could be held in Oxford or London, and might either be in place of, or in addition to, the

existing Ministers' Institute. There is already a Summer School of Theology in Oxford, (open to Anglicans and orthodox nonconformists); and when we consider that one of the most influential Professors of Divinity in Oxford, who takes part in this School, maintains that there is clear evidence that Jesus in his life-time initiated his disciples into the mystery of triune Godhead, it is surely well both for our ministers and for society at large that we should annually meet together to interchange our best thoughts on the ripest results of Biblical scholarship and of religious philosophy. Surely such a thoughtful and fraternal meeting, year by year, of those who are united by the great principle that spiritual truth is spiritually discerned would not only do much to help us individually, but would also intensify our brotherly love, and our sense of the immense importance of our common work and of our special mission among the Churches of Christendom."—CHARLES B. UPTON.

DR. MARTINEAU'S CRITICISMS CONSIDERED, BY THE REV. L. P. JACKS, M.A.

In offering some further remarks on this subject I shall deal principally with the objections raised by Dr. Martineau to the scheme proposed in the November number of the *Seed-sower*. Those interested in the scheme would, naturally, have rejoiced had it met with any measure of approval from the quarter of which the authority is highest. On the other hand it is no small advantage that the probable list of objections to the scheme should be presented at once in their most formidable shape, and with a discrimination of judgment and vigour of statement not likely to be surpassed.

In the first place, speaking in behalf of the scheme, I disclaim, with all the emphasis of which I am capable, any intention to organize the religious life of one group of churches in distinction from and opposition to the rest of the christian world. While addressed primarily to those who participate in our Triennial Conference —a convenient designation—there is nothing in the scheme itself to preclude its adoption over a much wider area. An examination of the contents and arrangement will perhaps suggest to the reader the conviction which has all along lain in the author's mind, namely, that a group of churches, however designated, which should unite in worship upon this or a similar method would possess much richer and wider religious affinities with the rest of Christendom than any which our group of churches can claim at the present moment. It may be asked what difference would the adoption of the scheme make in this respect, and why do we not possess those affinities already? The answer is—*because they have not yet received any united expression.* To become effective, to become known, felt, and acknowledged, the fundamentals of agreement must be *expressed.* And for this end it is not enough to launch them into the void; they must be expressed, to begin with, by some particular group of individuals. And who are so fitted to do this, both by their acknowledged principles and by their traditions, as ourselves? And if done by us it can be done in one way only, *i.e.*, by a united expression of the spirit of worship, and not by the formulation of beliefs.

But before our group of churches can become a basis for larger unity, there is the prior necessity that they must themselves draw more closely together—and it is the reiteration of this in the scheme which gives colour to Dr. Martineau's attack upon it as an attempt at doctrinal separation. A casual lot of bricks scattered on the ground cannot be the basis for anything. They must be first cemented together, and for that reason the proposal is put forth, in the first instance, as a scheme for the closer union of *our own* churches, but on lines which so far from precluding further extension of the building, actually imply and even invite it. The implication which Dr. Martineau finds in the scheme is expressed by him in these words:—"We may as well exclude Trinitarians as warn them off, *for they will not come,* though the door is open." Alas, our group of churches is not in the position of being able to use such language, even if they were unwise enough to wish to do so. They can neither avoid the sin of shutting the door, nor practice the virtue of keeping it open, for the very obvious reason that *they have no door;* nay, they have no building in which a door could be placed. We are, I venture to repeat, but a scattered lot of bricks. But we are forbidden to gather them, or even some of them, into a united structure, because it is said "that will involve exclusion: that will be closing the door." Forbid

us not! May not these stones be cemented together so as to form a temple of the Lord God, of which the doors shall stand open day and night?

"There is no reason in the nature of things, why others, who neither call themselves nor are called Unitarians, should not join in this work. In any case the fruits of it would be freely offered to all the world. If, by the united labours of devout men among us, an Annual of Devotion were drawn up unfolding in discussion all those aspects of the Universe and Human Life in which pious souls of every creed find a religious interpretation and distributing its contents in such order as might be deemed best by the joint wisdom of the authors—then there is reason to hope that the result would be found acceptable over a wide area and become a new bond among some of the scattered members of the "body of Christ."

"Dr. Martineau's second set of objections, on the ground of the scheme being *impracticable*, are based on the assumption that it is a *preaching* scheme. This however, as was pointed out in the first article, is not the case. In essence it is a scheme of *worship*. Its value would no doubt be enhanced if the minister should find himself able to make his preaching message follow the same lines. But this conformity of the sermon to the service admits of various degrees of completeness, from a sermon avowedly on the subject of the day to one which should deal with anyone of the numerous allied topics. It would thus be possible for anyone to adopt the scheme without obstructing the freedom of his spirit in a measure of which account need be taken. To bind ministers to preach on a set rotation of subjects year after year, would indeed be a proposal beyond all bounds of sense. To begin with, the scheme would be "put" into nobody's hands, but used only by those who were antecedently in sympathy with its aims and had chosen it of their own accord. And even in the matter of worship it is not proposed to cover the whole of any single service, ample room being left for the personal out-pouring of the minister's spirit. The Annual of Devotion should, in my judgment, offer for certain Sundays in the year suggestions of appropriate lessons and hymns, together with two or three prayers to be used alternatively or in succession. This would secure, through the consenting churches, the main conditions for a united worship.

Dr. Martineau asks, why is not the desired end served equally by the existing Liturgies? But the organic principle which underlies the scheme in the *Seed Sower* is not to be found in those Liturgies, admirable as they are. The object is not to unite in worship generally, without further discrimination of purpose, but to unite in worship of which the inspiring motive shall be avowed as the elements of universal religion presented in orderly succession. The power of doing this cannot be claimed for the existing Liturgies. Moreover, the "unifying charm" (to use Dr. Martineau's phrase) does not consist in the common repetition of *any* hymn or *any* prayer, but in the total impression of an order of worship, which, when completed, has conducted a multitude of human spirits to all the main fountain heads of religious life.

As to the old Christian year, my chief objection to using it as it stands is that those who have shared in the modern movements of religious thought cannot adopt its festivals without having constantly to explain their divergence from the accepted interpretation. To save themselves from being misunderstood, at Eastertime, for example, they are bound to lay emphasis on this difference, and the inevitable result is that their attitude makes an impression of negation, instead of positive assertion of religious truth, and becomes thereby disastrously weakened. On the other hand, a person who still accepted the traditional interpretation of Easter might very well adopt a festival embodying the universal idea of "dying to live," and at once present that idea under the special form of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. But the converse could not be done.

It is profoundly true, as Dr. Martineau says, that we have now to teach "things that have no dates, truths that are eternal." But the use to which this argument is put, if pushed to the extreme, would involve the position that a truth which is eternal cannot be treated of in time. Granted that the eternal truth of the moral imperative can be made the basis of worship and thought on *any* date, I confess I cannot see how its "eternal" nature is obscured if the date, instead of being unfixed, is determined and given a definite place in an allotted order."—L. P. JACKS.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

A Riddle.

"'I am the busiest workman that ever was known,
For I keep at my trade night and day,
In a dark little workshop I dwell all alone,
Never stopping to idle or play.

"'My hammer ne'er ceases its stroke upon stroke;
'Tis the same, if you wake, doze, or sleep;
And year after year (be sure 'tis no joke),
The same steady motion I keep.

"'When most out of order, then hardest I work,
And the strokes of my hammer increase;
But if e'er I grow weary or lie down to rest,
My labours for ever will cease.'"

Answer:—The human heart.

The Months.

JANUARY brings the snow,
Makes our feet and fingers glow.

FEBRUARY brings the rain,
Thaws the frozen lake again.

MARCH brings breezes loud and shrill,
Stirs the dancing daffodil.

APRIL brings the primrose sweet,
Scatters daisies at our feet.

MAY brings flocks of pretty lambs
Skipping by their fleecy dams.

JUNE brings lilies, tulips, roses,
Fills the children's hands with posies.

Hot JULY brings cooling showers,
Apricots, and gilliflowers.

AUGUST brings the sheaves of corn,
Then the harvest home is borne.

Warm SEPTEMBER brings the fruit,
Sportsmen then begin to shoot.

Fresh OCTOBER brings the pheasant,
Then to gather nuts is pleasant.

Dull NOVEMBER brings the blast,
Then the leaves are whirling fast.

Chill DECEMBER brings the sleet,
Blazing fire, and Christmas treat!

SARAH COLERIDGE.

The Echo.

"Hop, Hop!" shouted little Henry with glee, as he was sporting in his father's meadow, near the wood side. "Hop, hop!" resounded the forest.

"Who is there?" asked Henry with surprise, for he had never heard an echo. "Who is there?" replied the echo. "You blockhead?" exclaimed Henry at the top of his voice. "You blockhead!" was the reply from the forest. At this Henry got very angry, and called out many ugly names, which the voice from the forest faithfully repeated.

Now, when Henry could not see who it was that was speaking in the wood, he ran home to his mother with a complaint that a boy hid in the forest had called him bad names. "Ah, my son," said his mother, "this time you accuse yourself. You have heard nothing but the echo of your own words. The bad names came from your own lips. Had you used kind and gentle language, you would have had kind and gentle language in return. You will find it the same all your life. The treatment you receive from others will, in most cases, be an echo of the treatment others receive from you."

The Dog Dandie.

A gentleman in Edinburgh had a dog of the Newfoundland breed, named Dandie, which seemed to know every word his master said to him.

One evening this gentleman had some visitors in his house, one of them dropped a shilling on the floor, which, after the most careful search, could not be found. Seeing the dog sitting in a corner, looking quite as if he knew nothing about what was passing, his master said to him, "Dandie, find us the shilling, and you shall get a biscuit." He had no sooner spoken than the dog jumped upon the table, and laid down the shilling, which he had cunningly picked up without having been seen.

On another occasion, the gentleman, returning home rather late at night, found all the family in bed. He could not find his boot-jack in the place where it usually lay, nor could he find it anywhere in the room after the strictest search. He then said to his dog, "Dandie, I cannot find my boot-jack; search for it." The faithful animal, quite sensible of what had been said to him, scratched at the room door, which his master opened. Dandie set off to a distant part of the house, and soon returned carrying in his mouth the boot-jack, which his master had left that morning under a sofa, but had forgotten the fact.

A number of gentlemen who knew Dandie well were daily in the habit of giving him a penny, which he took to a baker's shop and bought bread for himself. One of these gentlemen, when passing along the street, was met by Dandie, who trotted along by his side looking up eagerly for his usual present. He then said to the dog, "I have not a penny just now, but I have one at home." Having returned to his house some time after, he heard a noise at the door, which was opened by the servant, when in sprang Dandie to receive his penny. In a frolic the gentleman gave the dog a bad one, which he as usual carried to the baker, but was refused his bread as the money was bad. Dandie took up the bad penny, walked back to the gentleman's door, at which he scraped, and when the servant opened it he laid down the penny at her feet, and marched off seemingly with the greatest contempt.

One Sunday when it was not likely that he could have received a present of money, Dandie was seen bringing home a loaf. Somewhat surprised at this his master desired the servant to search the room to see if any money could be found. While she was engaged in this task the dog seemed quite easy about the matter, till she went toward the bed, when he ran to her and gently drew her back from it. The gentleman then took hold of the dog while the servant went under the bed, where she found sevenpence halfpenny under a bit of cloth; but from that time Dandie never could endure the girl. After this he was seen to hide his money in the corner of a sawpit under the dust.

CAPTAIN BROWN.

Facing the Unknown.

O New Year, New Year, tell me true,
What wilt thou bring to me,—
Bring to me from the heavens blue,
Where thy bright home must be?

Thou comest, Godlike, in a cloud;
I cannot see thy form;
Is't sunshine that the mists enshroud,
Or lurketh there a storm?

I stretch my hands out unto thee;
Oh, speak to me and say!
I'd know what things shall come to me
Along this untrod way.

The old year gave me buds to hold;
And while I tended them,
And watched to see the flowers unfold,
They faded on the stem.

She whispered promises so fair
They drove away all fears;
But clouds drank up the sunny air,
And dripped in rainy tears.

She took me up on vision heights,
And showed a prospect sweet;
But I have stumbled through the nights
With weary, bleeding feet.

So tell me, New Year, what's to be
Upon each new to-morrow.
Shall my bright hopes abide with me,
Or change to shapes of sorrow?

A low-voiced wind came whispering
From out the mystery:
"I am the New Year, and I bring
That which is given to me.

"Thou livest not alone for joy,
Or but to gather flowers.
Lament not, then, what storms destroy;
Nor chide the dark-winged hours.

"Through cloud and sun and dripping rain
The Year her garment weaves,
And clothes the earth with golden grain
And decks with autumn leaves.

"And all the mingled days conspire
To make her work complete.
Even discords tremble on her lyre
To make the song more sweet.

"Not what thou hast, but what thou art,
And what thou yet shalt be:
Each year is but a verse, a part
Of life's full poesy.

"The minor mingles with the gay;
And, when the song is done,
Thou'lt see how each its part did play
To make the poem one.

"Then ask not what's ahead of thee,
Each day thy part fulfil;
Be sure that thy life's mystery
Obeys a higher will.

"'Tis love that in the darkness leads;
My face thou may'st not see;
It is enough for all thy needs
That thou do follow me."

M. J. SAVAGE.

News from the Field.

ALCESTER.—The Rev. J. Dale has resigned his ministry at Alcester, and preached his farewell sermon on Sunday, December 29th. At a meeting of the Trustees the following resolution was passed:—"That the Trustees express their appreciation of the work done by Mr. Dale at Alcester, and wish him every success in any new sphere of labour to which he may be called." We understand that the services at Alcester will be continued by lay preachers, under the direction of the Rev. John Harrison, acting for the Midland Christian Union.

BIRMINGHAM (*Small Heath*).—A Sunday School has been recently started with gratifying results. The evening congregations continue to grow and great interest is taken in the services.

BANBURY.—On Tuesday evening, December 3rd, a concert was held in the schoolroom of Christchurch Chapel, Horse Fair, Banbury. In the absence of Mr. Potts (who had kindly promised to take the chair, but was prevented by the press of business), the minister (the Rev. H. Hill) presided over the meeting. An excellent programme was well gone through during the evening. The schoolroom was filled by a very appreciative company of friends. Mr. F. T. C. Webb was the accompanist. At the close of the meeting the Chairman proposed, and Mr. Briscoe seconded, a hearty vote of thanks to all who had so willingly contributed to the success of the meeting.

LYNN.—On Monday, December 2nd, after a tea in the schoolroom, the Rev. Geo. Eyre Evans, of Whitchurch, Salop, preached the annual sermon in the Unitarian Christian Church, Broad Street. The sermon was an eloquent exposition of the words, "Be ye faithful unto death," &c., and was listened to with deep attention. The service was followed by the Communion, which was well attended and much aided by the efforts and devotion of a full choir.

LYE.—During the last month five cookery lectures have been delivered in the new classroom by Mrs. Wrigley. These were attended by our young people, and were greatly appreciated by them. The usual entertainment, given in aid of the Sunday School Savings' Club, was held in the Temperance Hall on Monday, December 2nd. Over £93 was paid to the members of the club on Tuesday, December 17th, this being the amount of money paid in with the addition of bonus.—The Rev. I. Wrigley has been elected Chairman of the Lye School Board.

MIDLAND SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION. — The Annual Autumnal Conference of this Association was held on Saturday afternoon, December 7th, at the Church of the Messiah Schools, Birmingham. Mr. S. T. Cross (Birmingham) presided, and, notwithstanding most wretched weather, over 150 teachers and friends were present, including the Revs. L. P. Jacks, J. C. Street, T. Pipe (Vice-President), W. J. Clarke, W. J. B. Tranter (Birmingham), H. McKean (Oldbury), E. D. Priestley Evans (Kidderminster), J. Harrison (West Bromwich); Mesdames Russell, Jolly, H. New, Wright, Tranter, Kimberley (Birmingham); Misses Beale, Kenwick, Cross, Gittins, Dowsing, Snape, Griffiths, Mould, Archer, Howard-Smith, Dora Howard-Smith, Abbott, Tranter, Smith (Birmingham), Eachus (Oldbury), Messrs. H. K. Beale, T. F. Derrington, W. J. Cross, H. New, W. H. Blumfield, W. H. Derrington, G. Davis, J. Kimberley, S. Jackson, T. Danks, E. Danks, W. C. MacStocker, W. Sorrill, G. Johnson, E. H. Sims, T. Edwards, Rowley, W. Lockett, H. Parker, V. W. Clarke, J. J. Coleman, W. Middleton, T. Morton (Birmingham), H. Reynolds (West Bromwich), W. Kirk, J. Sewell (Coventry), J. Baker (Oldbury), and Sam. Mould (Hon. Secretary). After tea (kindly provided by the Church of Messiah teachers) the conference was opened with hymn and prayer. The Rev. W. J. B. Tranter read a paper on "Teacher and Scholar; the needs of the one, and the fitness of the other." In the course of his address, he described the necessary qualifications of a teacher, and insisted upon earnest and thoughtful weekly preparation for the work. The teacher must have method in his teaching and love in his heart. Mr. Tranter urged the teachers to feed their minds upon the writings of the noblest and the best; suggested certain publications of the Sunday School Association as particularly useful guides, instancing the "Bible for Young People" as likely to clear away much that was surrounded in mystery as to many of the books in the Bible. He strongly believed, however, in the personal influence of the teacher. In conclusion, he pressed for religious education in our schools, claiming that teachers could do no real good for their scholars or themselves unless they had the courage of their convictions and taught what they felt and believed. The address, which was exceptionally instructive and full of encouragement, was listened to with great pleasure by the teachers and others present. At its close a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Tranter was moved by the Rev. H. McKean, who urged the teachers to make more use of the Sunday School Association publications, and thereby gain renewed inspiration to do their work intelligently and better in the future. This was seconded by Mr. T. F. Derrington, and carried unanimously. Among the other speakers who discussed the subject of the paper were the Rev. W. J. Clarke, he laying great stress upon the question, "Do our teachers realise the importance of their work?" Miss Cross, who thought the "practice" of religion should be taught in the Board Schools, but that the "theory" of religion should be reserved for the Sunday Schools; Mr. W. Kirk, who insisted upon the teacher personally visiting the homes of his scholars; Mr. V. W. Clarke, who contended that, as Unitarians are in the forefront of those at present asserting that Board School education should be free and unsectarian, it was the duty of our teachers to make their teaching Scriptural, moral, and religious; Mr. J. Kimberley, who advised the teachers to do something with their scholars during the week, such as country rambles, &c.; and Mr. J. Baker, who said that if we believed that our faith was stronger and better than that of the Orthodox Church, there should be a better attendance and harder work in our schools. It was a great reflection upon us, as Unitarians, that our schools were not better attended.—The President, in closing a very interesting discussion, aid that if the teacher worked with the desire to see his scholars grow up good, honourable, and sensible men and women, there would be no necessity for him to ask if he had succeeded in his work, the result was certain. Sunday School teaching was a solemn task, and could not be taken up with Sunday clothes. Example, and not precept, was wanted from the teachers.—Mr. Tranter having replied, the Hon. Secretary introduced a discussion upon the suggestions, made by the Sunday School Association for the appointment of visitors; and read the correspondence which had passed between him and Mr. Ion Pritchard. It was ultimately determined to leave the matter in the hands of the recently formed unions. Hearty votes of thanks to the Church of the Messiah Teachers for their hospitality and to the President for presiding having been passed, a hymn and benediction brought a most successful meeting to a close.

ERRATA.

The Seed Sower, DECEMBER, 1895.

Page 146 (Dr. Martineau's letter), 1st column, line 5—for *theses*, read *thesis*.

Line 19—for *Armenian*, read *Arminian*.

Page 147, 2nd column, line 16 from bottom—for *an*, read *and*.

Line 6 from bottom—after *spontaneous*, read (next line) *Christian activities. All that belongs to ecclesiastical polity is subject to organisation; but if you push it further, the spiritual life either rebels or is withered up.*